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SUBJECT: TOGO - PROGRESS IN PREPARING 2007 LEGISLATIVE
ELECTIONS

¶1. Summary: The GoT and the Electoral Commission, in consultation with the EU and UNDP, are moving ahead slowly with preparations for the legislative elections scheduled for June 24. According to the press, few believe the June 24 date will hold. UNDP experts say elections are not possible before early September. End Summary.

¶2. On April 5, the GoT approved the CFA 18 billion (USD 36 million) legislative elections budget presented by the CENI. The CENI received technical assistance from the UN Development Program (UNDP). The GoT promised to cover about CFA 5 billion (USD 10 million) of the total amount, and the European Union promised Euros 12 million (USD 16 million). In addition, the National Assembly passed a bill that provides some financial support for political parties. It also stipulates that political parties will receive bonuses based on the number of their female candidates elected to the National Assembly.

¶3. In compliance with the Global Political Accord signed last August, the GoT signed agreements with the Benin government and UNHCR-Benin and with Ghana government and UNHCR-Ghana on April 11. With these agreements, the GoT promises to provide protection and community reintegration assistance to encourage the voluntary return of Togolese refugees, and to enable them to participate in the upcoming legislative elections.

¶4. The CENI has been making significant progress in preparing for the elections. On March 8, in accordance with a point in the Global Political Accord, members of the CENI approved an internal election procedures manual. It requires that members seek consensus in decision-making, rather than using majority rule. At the end of March, 3,000 computer-based electoral kits, borrowed from the Democratic Republic of Congo, arrived in Lome. On April 3 and 4, three Belgian technical experts familiarized CENI members with the operation of the kits. The instructors took them through each step of the registration process, from the arrival of voters at the registration center to the issuance of digitally-based paper voter registration cards.

¶5. On April 00, the CENI organized a press conference to inform the public about the new registration process with the electoral kits. The process consists of entering the voter's information into the data base, taking a photograph and a fingerprint, printing the voter's registration card, protecting the card with lamination, and delivering it to the voter on-the-spot. The CENI stated that it should take less than 10 minutes to issue each voter's card.

¶6. For the CENI, much work remains. The CENI will officially install and train the 279 members of the local

electoral committees (CELIIs) and a larger number of registration officers on how to use the electoral kits and issue voter registration cards. Training on registering a person will take about 45 minutes. The CENI specified that 2,500 electoral kits would be earmarked for voter registration. The CENI believes that it could take about four weeks to issue cards to 2.3 million prospective voters, based on the number who voted in the April 2005 presidential election. (Note: Post thinks four weeks is extremely optimistic. End note.) The CENI will then need to train the CELIIs and the voting office workers on how to administer a party-list representation system, to be used for the first time in Togo.

¶7. On April 19 Ambassador attended a meeting of representatives of the EU, Germany and France called by the Resident Representative of UNDP. UNDP election experts provided their candid assessment of the feasibility of having an election on June 24. They advised that it would be difficult to imagine holding an election before early September.

¶8. Comment: The body politic does not seem to believe that elections will be held on June 24, nor does it seem particularly distressed at the possibility of slippage in the date. The mandate for the current National Assembly expires in October so a postponement of elections to September will probably be generally accepted. End Comment.

DIFFILY